

ICPS newsletter

Public policy campaigns crucial for reforms

There is an urgent need to spur the progress of reforms in Ukraine. This could be done by mobilising support from all stakeholders and the general public through raising awareness about the scope of the problems and clearly understanding the implications of each policy alternative. This process consists of policy analysis, public debates, and implementation monitoring

Reforms are slow because of faulty design

In Ukraine, there is a clear discrepancy between an already working democratic political mechanism that legitimises open political competition, and the lack of government policy process necessary to deal with pressure from conflicting yet formally legitimate interest groups.

This incompatibility is manifest between the Ukrainian Parliament, where key political forces are engaged in political competition, and the old hierarchical executive government machinery, which is utterly unequipped to deal with all the new societal forces in a transparent way.

This rudimentary incapacity of the formerly hierarchical government to take decisions and to implement them using democratic horizontal communications and reporting lines has nothing to do with the much-criticised absence of political will. Even the most experienced political leaders in the most developed democracies have problems pushing through their political agenda (for example, Clinton's failure with health reform).

Ukrainian politicians could not even be aware of the institutional demands which a democratic political system imposes on the executive government. For the Ukrainian executive to be effective under pressure from differing interest groups, it is imperative to fully revamp its structure, procedures, standards, and skills in such a way that a new capacity is built. This capacity would enable the government machinery to advise politicians on the implications

of policy options, to develop communication strategies, and to run policy campaigns. Today, such institutional capabilities do not exist.

Underestimated connection between legislative and policy work

Ukraine has received enormous amounts of international assistance to draft new democratic legislation for every aspect of reforms. Drafting legislation has developed into a most popular and profitable sphere of professional activity. Both donors' efforts and the efforts of competing interests have been focused directly on the ultimate political instrument—legislation. Because no group has been strong enough to push through any whole law, the texts of legislation have become the arena of policy competition, contradicting each other and within themselves.

As a result, the country faces a hyperinflation of legislative drafting, with all interested parties stuck with growing numbers of appallingly inconsistent drafts and laws. Ukrainians did not know any better, and donors did not know that Ukrainians did not know.

The missing "not-knowing" part has been policy work; policy alternatives were not compared, neither were politicians or the public advised on the comparative consequences of this or that decision. Responsibility for the consequences did not become public, while all parties have pressed for their options to be directly incorporated into law.

What should be a final or ultimate policy instrument—legislation—has been developed in Ukraine before policy was even adopted! Every stakeholder in this competition, those representing reforms and vested interests, hoped to overcome the others by taking the faster route to the finish. Today, everybody feels deceived.

Underestimated interdependence between public participation and substantive policy work

Another important area of donor support to Ukraine has been democracy building, which targeted non-government organisations. NGOs have been trained in fund-raising, coalition building, and advocacy activities. Countless seminars, conferences, and roundtables have been supported concerning the role of civil society in democracy building. An army of activists concerned with their own important role have been nurtured. An advisory committee of NGOs was created at the World Bank resident mission in Ukraine.

They were carefully distinguished from policy think tanks, the main criteria being no connection to policy issues. Democracy has been dismembered in the donor thinking, and public participation cut off from policy decision making in donor assistance projects. A number of projects provided ready-made policy advice to the executive government on critical policy issues (which it unequivocally could not digest), while another group kept the public away from the policy debate by not supporting those who deal with policy analysis; thus, a sterile "civil society" was created that was not even engaged in the policy sphere.

Not only does the post-Soviet Ukrainian government executive not have skills in effective public policymaking, in the same way the Ukrainian public is not at all skilled in effective ways of influencing the decision making and monitoring implementation. Nevertheless, Ukraine does not have to invent societal democratic instruments such as cost-benefit analysis, impact analysis, Green and White Books on important policy issues, public service delivery surveys, and public budget hearings. The role of policy think tanks and policy watchdogs in the developed democracies cannot be overestimated; in fact, there would not be any democracies without these public policy instruments. They structure the arena of political competition into coherent policy positions and their implications, leaving aside as indispensable but hardly manageable the area of politics.

In Ukraine, because we do not yet have a structured public policy forum, people talk only about the personalities of

various politicians and their relationships. Reforms remain at the fringe of vibrant political life. Democracy activists talk about human rights, leaving, however, unchanged the economic and social elements of democracy, such as quality of public services, and prudence in the management of public finances.

ICPS suggests that introducing policy campaigns would speed up reforms

Western governments often use the services of independent think tanks for a "second opinion" and for public policy campaigns. When the government is stuck, repeating actions which either fail or do not bring the expected results, it is very useful to bring fresh forces into the battle. Government priorities may need an external push and pull to be taken out of a stall.

Full-fledged policy campaigns consist of three main components: analysis,

consultations/communication, and implementation. Rigorous analysis of urgent policy issues includes defining the scope of the problem (social and economic impact for stakeholders), analysis of alternatives and their implications, and analysis of implementation feasibility (legislation, institutions, infrastructure, skills, financing, and compliance with European standards). Analysis of legislation entails analysis of its policy impact, with a policy memo indispensably accompanying each legislative draft. Implementation demands a change management plan, where planning, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting are one system. This will help to develop coherent public policy, and prepare the draft law implementing this policy. ■

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ICPS news

ICPS presents the results of the project "Analytical Support for the Privatisation of the Ukrtelekom OJSC"

Marking the completion of the project "Analytical Support for the Privatisation of the Ukrtelekom OJSC", implemented jointly since February 2002 by experts from Ukrtelekom, the State Committee for Communications and Informatisation of Ukraine, the International Center for Policy Studies, and the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, a presentation was held at the premises of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Invited representatives of the key players in the telecommunications market of Ukraine, as well as of NGOs and the mass media were informed about the project implementation and its main results.

Of particular interest was a talk given by international consultant Alex Sundakov, dedicated to policy options regarding the privatisation of national communications operators, the principles of regulating telecoms markets in foreign countries, and possible solutions to typical problems for telecommunications sectors around the world. ICPS plans to dedicate an upcoming issue of the Bulletin to this topic.

For additional information, please contact Olexander Kalashnik at kalashnik@icps.kiev.ua tel.: (044) 236-4477.

Regional statistics improvements in progress

Under the framework of the project "Developing Institutional Capacity of the Executive in the Area of Regional Statistics", a seminar was held to identify objectives for training regional data users. The aim of this seminar was to specify objectives for a future local government training program targeting public servants who are responsible for regional policymaking.

This seminar created the conditions necessary to implement the "Action Plan on Subnational Statistics Development", designed during the previous stage of the project, which was carried out in five East European countries from April to November 2002 as commissioned by the World Bank, OECD, and CDE. The primary aim of implementing the Action Plan in Ukraine is to bring the existing regional database into line with user needs, both at the regional and national levels.

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The International Centre for Policy Studies is an independent non-profit research organisation whose mandate is to promote the introduction of public policy concepts and practices in Ukraine. This is achieved by increasing the know-how of key government officials for policy choices, formulation, and debate, and the awareness of the public-at-large of the benefits of policy.

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